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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000360

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DEPT OF JUSTICE FOR DAAG/CRM SWARTZ

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TAGS: PTER PREL EU TU

SUBJECT: TURKS TERM INAUGURAL TURKEY-EU CT TALKS "GOOD START"

REF: A. BERLIN 172

1B. BRUSSELS 290

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice Weiner. Reasons: 1.4 (b)(d).

11. (C) Summary. The first Turkey-EU bilateral counterterrorism talks held February 19 in Brussels were generally positive, according to MFA officials. Although the Euros continue to be focused on Al Qaeda and counter radicalization, new CT mechanisms can also be applied to the PKK, they noted. The Turks were impressed by new EU Counterterrorism Coordinator De Kerchove and pleased by his approach, but are withholding judgment on his ability to influence EU members' CT actions. End summary.

PKK: "It's Your Problem"

12. (C) Turkey and the EU Troika held their first bilateral counterterrorism talks February 19 in Brussels, MFA officials told us February 22. MFA Security Affairs Director General Hayati Guven led Turkey's delegation. Andre Slapnicar, representing the Slovenian Presidency, headed the European team, which also included representatives of the European Commission and European Council, MFA Security Affairs Deputy Department Head Ceren Etiz explained. EU Counterterrorism Coordinator Gilles De Kerchove also played a major role in the discussions. Conspicuously absent, from Etiz's perspective, were representatives from France, the next Presidency. Talks opened with each side presenting a tour d'horizon, Department Head Metin Ergin noted. For the Turks, Guven highlighted the quantity of Afghan drugs en route to Europe seized by Turkey, the routes used by drug smugglers and the relationship between those routes and the routes used by terrorists. The Europeans assessed the PKK to be active throughout Europe, "but not violent there." They acknowledged potential risks in Europe, but believed the PKK's primary activities would remain where they are, especially in Turkey's southeast. Violence would not spread. The European message seemed to be "the PKK is your problem," Etiz suggested.

EU: Focus on AQ, Countering Radicalization

13. (C) The EU described its primary concern as the Al Qaeda threat from northern Africa and outlined efforts to prevent and counter radicalization, Ergin related. They reviewed

Germany's initiative to monitor the Internet, conferences on countering radicalization in educational institutions and prisons, and a questionnaire being distributed to member states on what each is doing to counter radicalism. The EU plans to publish a summary of best practices. DG Guven told the Europeans they already know a lot about PKK activities in Europe but don't want to act on that information, Etiz continued. If they were serious about Europe being united and following the rule of law, the EU would make sure its members implement its international commitments, Guven asserted.

De Kerchove Impressive

¶4. (C) The Turkish delegation was impressed by the new EU Counterterrorism Coordinator De Kerchove, whom they found to be sophisticated and knowledgeable, Etiz observed. The Turks were particularly pleased by his expressed desire to further develop bilateral cooperation against terrorists targeting Turkey and his wish to pursue the dialogue begun in March 2007 between Turkey and the European Justice Coordination Office (EUROJUST). On extradition, an issue of prime concern to Turkey, De Kerchove acknowledged that because the matter involves national law, the EU's role was limited. On asylum, however, he felt the situation would improve with implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and greater harmonization of asylum laws. Etiz remarked that Turkey, at the suggestion of the Danes, will work to include terrorists by name on the EU's list of terrorists. Until now, Turkey has submitted only the names of entities. Etiz suggested that Embassy RLA Hayden work with MFA on this project.

A Good Start

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¶5. (C) Both sides came away from these inaugural talks pleased by what they had heard from the other side, Etiz stated. Guven invited De Kerchove to Ankara to continue the dialogue. The Turks are now evaluating the usefulness of the talks. While the Euros remain focused on Al Qaeda, the new CT mechanisms it is developing can also be applied to the PKK and other terrorist groups. De Kerchove is clearly a good, sincere interlocutor. The important question is the degree of influence the EU really has over its members when it comes to terrorism-related issues, Etiz observed.

Comment

¶6. (C) The first bilateral C/T talks between Turkey and the EU helped advance the process of engaging the Europeans more actively in the fight against the PKK and, hopefully, helped further better communication between the Turks and the Euros. More needs to be done to increase understanding between the Turks and individual European countries, as well. Early February discussions by S/CT Deputy Coordinator Frank Urbancic in Berlin and Brussels were helpful (Refs A and B). The March 25-27 U.S.-Turkey-European roundtable on extradition in Istanbul offers the next good opportunity to move the process forward.

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